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## Journal of Forensic and Legal Medicine

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## Book reviews

**Forensic & Medico-Legal Aspects of Sexual Crimes and Unusual Sexual Practices, Anil Aggrawal. CRC Press (2008). 424 pages, \$99.95, ISBN-10: 1420043080; ISBN-13: 978-1420043082**

This is a useful source book which describes a wide spectrum of sexual practices and differentiates between those which are illegal (with helpful comparisons between national jurisdictions and legal codes), those which may escalate to that category and those that merely push the boundaries of what any particular society or time would deem “normal”. There are illustrative case studies and descriptions of relevant ICD 10 and DSM 4 classifications.

Most of the sexual practices which have the potential, at least, to conflict with the law, are then classified, showing the progression for frotteurs, for example, from class I: fantasising about the behaviour, II: consensual activity, III: romantic frotteurs who carry out the illegal activity but can also form normal sexual relationships, IV: the fearless frotteur who is willing to forfeit his anonymity for increased physical contact and V: excusive, the last of whom cannot form a normal sexual relationship – frotteurism is his sole outlet for sexual gratification. Such progressions are demonstrated for fetishists, graded from desirers up to fetishistic murderers, for whom this has become an obligatory activity to achieve arousal.

An incredible number (547) of fetishes are listed, many of which I have never encountered, in the course of my work as a psychosexual therapist; for example, anolingus – arousal from licking lizards or homophilia – arousal from hearing or giving sermons. Pantophilia – arousal from just about everything imaginable – seems to sum up human inventiveness when it comes to sexual gratification.

This work explores theories of aetiology, from biological theories and courtship disorder theory to John Money's Lovemaps and operant conditioning. The complexity of human sexuality is recognised: sex (male/female/inter biological sex), gender (male/female/trans/3rd gender) and orientation (homo/hetero/bi/auto/a – sexual).

There is often little that can be offered in the way of objective assessment in cases of alleged sexual offences: penile plethysmography and polygraph testing have limited scope and possible treatment options such as hormones, SSRI antidepressants and lithium are similarly restricted in their application. It is also claimed that penile phallometry (measurement of penile response to visual imagery of consensual intercourse and rape) can produce a rape index which can distinguish potential rapists from non-rapists. Even if true, its practical application seems limited.

Sexual addiction is not, in itself criminal, although it may become so when it involves child pornography sites. Paraphilias represent a situation where the sexual stimulus is in some way deviant (shoe, child, corpse) whereas in sexually addictive or compulsive behaviour, the stimulus is socially acceptable but the sexual drive is excessive and impulse control poor. As a therapist, this is an area of increasing concern and requests for help, as the Internet has both facilitated access and encouraged progression, with the secrecy and re-enforcing nature of the contact. This area is touched on but not explored in any depth.

Paedophilia and its aetiology is explored, mainly considering biological and neuro-developmental theories with little exploration of psychological and sociological factors; this chapter is perhaps more limited in scope than many of the other topics explored.

As a sexual offences examiner, I found the chapter on rape addressed the issues of legal definition, forensic examination and aftercare; while there may be slight differences in our current examination of complainants in the UK (e.g. use of lubricant), the chapter gives a very useful overview. It also explored the issue of consent and when there may be sufficient coercive pressure to undermine the legitimacy of consent; consent, while necessary, may not be sufficient to make a sexual practice legal as in *R v Brown* where consent to sadistic practices did not invalidate the activity as an assault. Rape represents an inherently legal activity, made illegal by lack of consent, and the difficulties this poses in the context of criminal law is highlighted.

The historical progression from 1781 on the issue of how much penetration is required to constitute rape and the recognition in 1841 that an examination finding of *virgo intacta* does not preclude the offence of rape, is of interest. The chapter also looks at international differences in statutes concerned with sexual assault. The statement however, that ‘rape of men, whether by women or other men, is not a highly problematic issue’ is hard to justify.

In conclusion, *Forensic & Medico-Legal Aspects of Sexual Crimes and Unusual Sexual Practices* makes interesting reading, especially in its wide ranging exploration of paraphilias and may be a useful reference for those working in the field of both sexual offences and psychosexual therapy.

Caroline M. Jones\*

*Forensic Physician for Merseyside Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Panel, Parkfield Medical Centre, Sefton Road, New Ferry, Wirral, CH62 5HS, UK*

\* Tel.: +44 151 644 0055, 07775 901513 (mobile); fax: +44 151 643 1679.

E-mail address: [caroline.jones7@nhs.net](mailto:caroline.jones7@nhs.net)

Available online 9 October 2010

doi:10.1016/j.jflm.2010.09.002

**Sexual assault – a forensic clinician's practice guide 2010, White C. ISBN: 978-0-9564737-0-7**

The author states that the aim of this book is to provide a practical guide for clinicians dealing with sexual assault cases with easily accessible information so that this book can be used during the examination process. This aim is definitely achieved but this book is so much more!